



**Comments in support of**

**House Bill 123  
House Appropriation Committee**

January 12, 2009

**Timeless Seeds, Inc  
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Chairman Sesso and Members of the Committee:

My name is David Oien. I am a third generation Montana farmer from Conrad, and a co-founder and the manager of Timeless Seeds, Inc. Timeless is a specialty grain processing and marketing company that was created by 3 Montana friends and myself 1987 to market the production from our own farms. We now contract and buy organic and specialty grains from farmers across the state, clean and package those grains, and market them to food manufacturers, natural food and grocery stores, and specialty food distributors from coast to coast. We also have a handful of customers in Asia and Europe. We have offices in Conrad and a production facility and warehouse in Ulm, near Great Falls.

I am here to support, with one important exception, HB 123. I offer my support because HB 123 would continue to provide crucial technical services and financing assistance for hundreds of small businesses in this state. I'm sure Ron DeYong of Dept. of Ag, Toni Priete of Dept. of Commerce, and Steve Holland of MMEC and others have provided you with aggregate numbers of businesses helped, jobs created, economic impact generated.

I am here to tell you that they are talking about real companies and real people. They are talking about me and others like me. Four of the programs supported by this bill have helped and continue to help my business and my employees in very specific, very concrete ways. What these programs do matters, and the programs are accessible and valuable to small businesses like mine.

Here are some ways these programs have helped my company:

1. **MMEC.** I have utilized the services of MMEC for over 14 years: first, to engineer a packaging line layout that provides meaningful employment for 14-20 developmentally disabled adults in Conrad; then in 2001, to help develop various processing expansion scenarios that resulted in a \$750,000 expansion of our manufacturing facility in Ulm; and currently, in developing a marketing model for a dietary fiber supplement that would be outsourced manufactured either in Billings or Arlee.

I had the opportunity to serve on the MMEC Board of Advisors, and I can tell you both as a client and board member, MMEC is by far the most professional, most effective, most client-focused organization—either private or public-- I have ever experienced.

2. **EXPORT TRADE ENHANCEMENT.** Timeless is a small and under capitalized company, in a rural state, selling specialty food grains in a niche market. And yet for the past 10 years, an important and significant part of our business has been in overseas markets. The credit for our ability to do this is due directly to the market outreach efforts by the Montana Dept. of Ag. and Commerce, and most particularly to the highly professional and efficient Montana Trade Offices in Taiwan and Japan.

Serving export markets is a huge challenge for any company, and is extremely daunting for small companies. Complex and changing international regulations, shipping logistics, language and market barriers are all part of the game. I regularly rely on Commerce staff for assistance and advice. Numerous times over the past decade (and as recently as 2 weeks ago), Mei Mei Wang, the MT trade officer in Taiwan, has come to my aid getting our Montana-grown products into both China and Taiwan. Put simply, without the Taipei office, Timeless would not be selling to Taiwan or China.

Timeless Seeds is not going to reverse the trade deficit by itself, but with ongoing technical support from the Export Enhancement program we can do our little part.

3. **SMALL BUSINESS DEVELOPMENT CENTER.** Two years ago, Timeless faced a decision: get bigger/get better or eventually get out. We had proven products, we were confident of the growing markets, but we did not have the processing infrastructure to serve the market. Based primarily on a Feasibility Study partially funded by Growth Thru Ag, Rebecca Engum and the SBDC in Great Falls helped make "staying in" feasible. SBDC came to bat for Timeless and helped make a \$750,000 expansion happen. Thanks to our business expansion, Timeless has gone from 1 employee to 6. It is ironic that while many large companies across the country are laying workers off, we are actually bringing a new hire on board this week at our Ulm facility.

Again, Timeless isn't going to turn the big scale economy around, but thanks in part to SBDC we have increased our staff by 500% over the past 3 years, plus we've provided 14- 20 jobs to disabled adults in our packaging line.

4. **GROWTH THROUGH AGRICULTURE.** GTA is without doubt one of the most exciting programs available to innovate agricultural businesses offered by any state in the Union.

As you can see by the attached promotional sheet, one of our product lines is a branded retail package line consisting of 10 gourmet-quality specialty grains. This line is currently in several hundred grocery stores, natural food stores, and specialty food stores across the country. Without the GTA program we would not have had the ability to even develop the package design and promotional materials that got us into the first store in 2001. Now shoppers in to the most exclusive stores in San Francisco, in Seattle, in LA, in Boston and elsewhere seek out and buy Montana-grown products, processed and packed by Montana workers, branded and marketed by a Montana company. This is what GTA does. It gives little companies a shot at stepping out of their little box by adding value to raw commodities, by developing "ready for prime time" products, and by finding higher value markets.

It is here I offer my exception to my support of HB 123. Item 9 (b)(ii) reduces GTA funding by 50%. I personally think this is a big mistake. I think you should double the original funding, so the program could assist more of the dozens of good proposals they now deny every year, and so they could fully fund projects they currently underfund. In fact, GTA actually should be a model for other economic development programs as a way to help entrepreneurs outside the ag. sector.

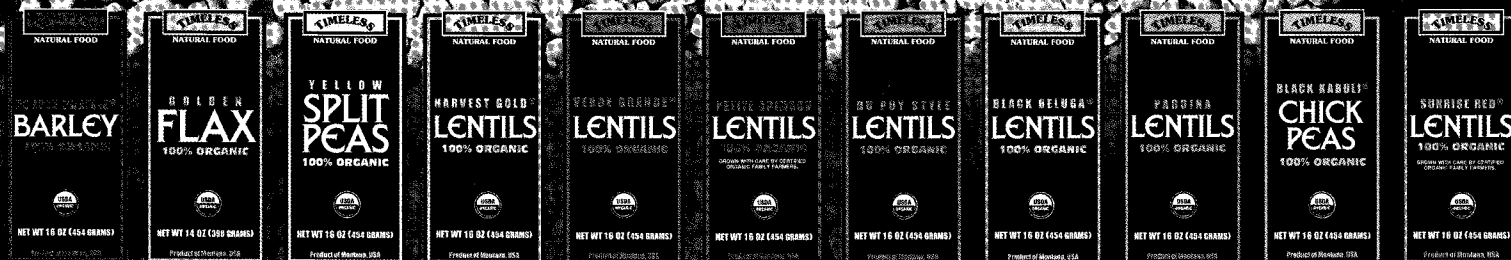
In summary, for more than a decade, a number of the programs supported by HB 123 have provided very real, concrete technical and marketing assistance that have played a crucial role in helping my company pursue a dream, reach markets both domestically and overseas, employ people in rural communities, and bring money back into our local and state economy. For my company, MMEC, Export Trade Enhancement, SBDC, and Growth Through Ag have been essential in helping make this happen. I urge your support for HB 123, and again, I recommend that you actually restore or increase full funding for Growth Through Agriculture.

I appreciate the opportunity to offer my comments, and welcome further questions from any and all committee members.

# TIMELESS

## NATURAL FOOD

America's only gourmet line of  
**CERTIFIED ORGANIC**  
lentils, peas, chickpeas, flax  
and hullless barley creates  
an exciting new category!



### COMPANY PROFILE

Timeless Seeds is located where the Great Plains of America unfold from the Rocky Mountain Front into the renowned Golden Triangle — Montana's most productive agricultural area. Here, the cool, dry environment is ideal for production of high quality, certified organic cereal grains, pulse crops, and edible seeds for which Timeless has become famous. The hallmark of Timeless Seeds, Inc. has been the introduction of unique and highly nutritious specialty grains like our Black Beluga® Lentils, Purple Prairie® Barley and Black Kabuli® Chickpeas.

Timeless was created in 1987 by four organic farmers to market the product from their own farms. We now contract and source organic grains from dozens of organic family farmers throughout Montana and the surrounding region.

Timeless grains are marketed worldwide. The award-winning package design of the retail line is recognized throughout the USA.



Timeless Natural Food

P.O. Box 881 • Conrad, Montana 59425 USA • [www.timelessfood.com](http://www.timelessfood.com)

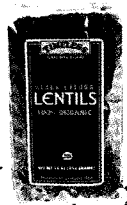
406-278-5722

# Natural Choice for Gourmet Chefs, Health Conscious Shoppers and Vegetarians!

## BLACK BELUGA® LENTILS

Small, black, and unusual, this "caviar" of lentils is a 24% protein powerhouse. Introduced to the natural food industry by Timeless. Excellent as a side dish with fish or chicken. Cooks in 20 minutes.

UPC 6-83855-06041-4



## PETITE CRIMSON LENTILS

Red-orange lentil famous in Turkish and Mideast cuisine. Quick cooking and perfect for certain soups and purees.

Cooks in 8-10 minutes.

UPC 6-83855-06045-2



## BLACK KABULI® CHICKPEAS

The charcoal black seed coat is sure to catch the eye of chefs and chickpea aficionados. Great to mix with blonde chickpeas in salads or soups. A Timeless exclusive!

UPC 6-83855-06021-6



## SUNRISE RED® LENTILS

Reminiscent of dawn in Montana, this large red lentil transforms to the yellow of the noonday sun when cooked. Sweet in flavor, and well suited to East Indian cuisine (masoor dal), puree soups, or any recipe calling for red lentils.

Cooks in 8-10 minutes.

UPC 6-83855-06046-9



## HARVEST GOLD® LENTILS

The color of sunshine, this buttery lentil is a rapid cooking source for natural health benefits of protein, dietary fiber, and folates. Cooks in 10-12 minutes. Great in baked goods.

UPC 6-83855-06047-6



## YELLOW SPLIT PEAS

Sweeter and more versatile than green peas. Recommended for both soups and salads.

UPC 6-83855-06012-4



## PARDINA LENTILS

Very popular in Spain and Morocco. Mid-sized lentil with a slightly nutty flavor and good cooking qualities. Cooks in 20 minutes. Seldom seen as certified organic.

UPC 6-83855-06044-5



## GOLDEN FLAX

Health food of the decade! A great source for Omega-3 oils, lignans, and dietary fiber. Eat raw, ground into meal, or in baked goods. Millions of Americans eat flax every day for its many health benefits.

UPC 6-83855-06032-2



## VERDE GRANDE® LENTILS

Large, green lentil with an earthy flavor. Recommended for hearty soups and baked dishes. A favorite in South America. Cooks in 30-35 minutes.

UPC 6-83855-06048-3



## DU PUY STYLE LENTILS

The gourmet lentil of Europe, with a distinctive peppery flavor. Smooth texture and firmness after cooking suggests it for salads and soups.

Cooks in 25 minutes.

UPC 6-83855-06043-8



## PURPLE PRAIRIE® BARLEY

This unique, naturally hullless barley originated in Tibet. 15% protein and the highest source we've seen for cholesterol-fighting beta glucans. An acceptable wheat allergy substitute. Sweet in flavor, it's a great whole grain substitute for pearled barley.

UPC 6-83855-06011-7



**Certified Organic**  
**GMO-Free • Gluten-Free**  
**High Nutrition**  
**Unequalled Quality**  
**Impressive "Banner Effect"**  
**Unique Selection**  
**Biodegradable Cello Pack**  
**Award-Winning Design**

**We are committed to a partnership...**

### WITH NATURE

We grow the healthiest food our only come from pristine environments with naturally mineral-rich soil from land and water of agricultural chemicals and synthetic fertilizers.

### WITH CERTIFIED ORGANIC FARMERS

We work with an extensive network of certified organic family farmers who take pride in their land and their crops. We support the farmers who are building more sustainable, fair prices, and new market opportunities.

### WITH OUR COMMUNITY

We are honored to participate in sustainable agriculture programs in our school, to support numerous food and justice events throughout Montana, and to offer meaningful local employment to over 20 developmentally disabled adults in producing our lentils.

### WITH OUR VALUED CUSTOMERS

Timeless prides itself in providing customers with the highest quality products, land-free and certified organic. We work with our customers to meet their special requirements. We encourage our customers to try the new and organic products that we discover.

### Timeless Natural Food

P.O. Box 801 • Coeur d'Alene, Montana 59625 USA

www.timelessnatural.com • 406-276-6722

**REPRESENTED BY**

Lentils/Peas/Barley . . . 16 oz. 8/case • Case Gross Weight: 8 lbs. 11 oz.  
Flax/Chickpeas . . . . . 14 oz. 8/case • Case Gross Weight: 7 lbs. 6 oz.  
Pallet Dimensions . . . . 40" x 48" x 52"  
Pallet Configuration . . . 256 Cases (8 tiers x 32 cases/tier)  
Shelf Display . . . . . 7.25" (L) x 3.34" (W) x 5.86" (H)



**Featured by Quality Grocers and Fine Dining Establishments across the US**